

27. Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

At La Petite Academy we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times. We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements.

Menus are planned for six months (Summer and Winter menus), with a four-week rotation. All menus are displayed in the nursery porch and on the website. Due to any supply issues, we reserve the right to alter the menu at any given time.

Parents can choose to bring a packed lunch in for their child/ren or they can have the nursery meals. Due to allergies, children who bring in extra food in their bags will not be allowed to consume this while in the care of the nursery.

We are a **nut free** nursery.

We ensure that:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Menus are planned in advance and in line with example menu and guidance produced by the Department for Education. These reflect cultural diversity and variation and are displayed for children and parents to view
- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the contents of each meal
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Menus include at least 5 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health. Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies, and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated
- Individual dietary requirements are respected (see below). We gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements, before a child starts

or joins the nursery. Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child. The parents must supply the hospital care plan to the nursery to enable us to do this

- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. An adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks at all times. Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies and respect cultural differences in diets and eating practices. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy
- Staff should not be eating their own meals with the children, as this should be done on their designated breaks. Where staff start work before 8:30am they are allowed a short period of time to eat their own breakfast away from the children if required, with the manager on duty being informed of this to ensure ratios and safety are maintained
- Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and conversation is encouraged
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks and feeding themselves
- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- Where possible, we provide foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones, such as through event days and baking activities
- As per the NHS nutrition guidelines, children under the age of 12 months will not have snacks in the day. They will have 3 meals a day and follow their weaning needs when food is prepared. If the practitioner thinks they are hungry between feeds, they should prepare them a bottle of milk
- All children must have their hands cleaned (washed or with hand wipes) before eating any food
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will have his/her food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish his/her first course, he/she will still be given a helping of dessert

- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children (palm of the hand, scoop)
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions
- The nursery provides parents with daily feedback of feeding routines for all children
- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and is always in sight **and** hearing of a staff member
- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions such as birthdays or special event days with the occasional treat of foods such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite. Where we have frequent birthdays and celebrations, we consider other alternatives such as celebrating through smiles and praise, stickers and badges, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song
- We do not allow parents to bring in homemade cakes etc on special occasions. They are welcome however, to bring in a shop-bought cake which has a printed list of ingredients so that we can ensure only children who are able to eat the cake safely do so
- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive level 2 training in food hygiene (Atlas) which is updated regularly
- The nursery cook, manager, assistant manager and lead practitioner have further Highfield training
- All staff wear a blue apron when serving or preparing food, and staff with nail polish/false nails also wear blue gloves. Staff not wearing gloves must sanitise their hands prior to serving or preparing food. Staff should also use serving utensils so that they minimise the amount they touch children's food
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

Packed lunches

We allow children to bring packed lunches into the setting during their government funded hours. We provide parents with the guidelines below for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance (<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>) and Food for Life's packed lunches guidance (<https://bit.ly/4t3Jb9d>).

We request parents use ice packs in lunch boxes and/or thermos flasks as we do not have the facilities to refrigerate packed lunches or heat up lunches from home.

Children's lunch boxes are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed. If an allergen is present, they may be required to eat their packed lunch away from other children. Choking hazards, foods past their use by date or foods containing nuts will not be served but will be sent home for parents to give at a later time.

At La Petite Academy our aim is to ensure that all packed lunches consumed in nursery provide the child with healthy and nutritious food that is similar to the food that is served in nursery and provides a balanced diet. This policy applies to all children and parents providing packed lunches to be consumed within the nursery. At no time will a child be made to feel ashamed or uncomfortable about the contents of their lunch box. However, should parents consistently send packed lunches which do not meet our objectives below, then a member of staff will speak to the parent away from the child.

Parents should note that:

- The nursery will ensure that free, fresh drinking water is readily available at all times for children bringing in packed lunches
- Should a child bring in juice or a smoothie to drink, this will only be given at meal times and not throughout the day
- The nursery will work with the children to provide attractive and appropriate dining room arrangements
- The nursery does not wash plates, bowls etc, sent from home and will return these in the packed lunch box for cleaning at home
- The nursery does not provide cutlery or crockery for children bringing in packed lunches
- There needs to be an awareness of nut allergies and that **NO** nuts are not put into a child's lunch box, including baked within other products

- Should a child with a severe anaphylactic reaction to food be in the nursery, we reserve the right to request that specific foods are not sent into the nursery.

Packed lunches should include:

- At least two portions of fruit and one portion of vegetables e.g., carrot sticks, cucumber, small apple or orange, banana, dried fruit, mini tomatoes, mango cubes
- Meat, fish, or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g., chicken, turkey, ham, beef, pork, tuna, lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, falafel)
- A starchy food e.g., bread, pasta, crackers, rice cakes, oat cakes, pitta bread, tortilla wraps.
- Dairy food e.g., milk, cheese, yoghurt or fromage frais (or dairy alternative)
- Drink (e.g., fruit juice, milk, yoghurt drink or smoothie) or water will be provided.

High fat meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages should only be included occasionally. It is not appropriate for lunchboxes to contain chocolate (e.g. bars, buttons), sweets (e.g. Haribos), choking hazards (e.g. popcorn, chewing gum) or fizzy (carbonated) drinks.

Our alternative suggestions to snacks such as crisps, include:

- Savoury crackers or breadsticks served with a dip
- Sliced vegetables and fruit
- Cereal bars
- Dried fruit
- Baked crisps

Our alternative suggestions to snacks such as chocolate bars, include:

- Sugar free jellies with fruit
- Fruit, vegetables
- Scones (plain or with dried fruit)
- Fruit based cake e.g., carrot cake, gingerbread, banana loaf, date loaf, fruit loaf (or the same but in the form of a muffin)

Assessment, evaluation and review of packed lunches

Key workers will hold discussions with parents (e.g., at handovers) regarding their child's lunches and appetites. Any food not eaten will be returned home so parents can see how much their child has consumed. If staff members feel that

a child's lunchbox has not been balanced and healthy over the course of time, then staff will discuss this in private with parents to offer suggestions for improvements and ensure that a copy of this policy has been seen by the parent.

Special diets and allergies

The nursery caters for a range of special diets for allergies and parental preference, such as dairy free, vegetarian, pescetarian, and vegan. Parents should note that meat served in nursery is not Halal so may wish to request an alternative diet.

To ensure that children are only served the correct food we follow the guidelines below:

- All children must have a placemat colour coded to their dietary requirements. This must be made on the child's first day at the setting.
- No adult is allowed to serve food to children with red or green placemats unless they have signed for it themselves. Students and supply staff must not sign for food or serve children with red or green placemats.
- When new staff start at the setting, they must not serve any food until they have completed their food allergy training module and completed the relevant section of their induction booklet and had this signed off by their mentor.
- Children must be served in the following order: packed lunches, red, green, then blue placemats.
- No serving utensils are to be mixed across different dietary requirement foods.
- Children with red placemats should not be seated at the main tables if any food being served at that meal contains something to which they are allergic. Packed lunches should be checked for allergens and children seated away if required.
- No food is to be taken between rooms without specific permission from the manager on duty (e.g. if more vegetables are needed in one room and there are some left in the other room).
- All dietary requirement sheets are to be completed at the time of eating or as soon as practicable immediately after. It is not acceptable to complete all these at the end of the day.
- If any staff are unsure of their responsibilities or what food is required for each child, they are to refer to the manager on duty.
- No child should be served any food unless the staff member is absolutely certain it suits their dietary requirements.

The nursery recognises that some children may require special diets that do not allow for the packed lunch standards to be met exactly (e.g., dairy free, egg allergy). In this case parents are to be responsible for ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy and balanced as possible. For this reason, children are also not permitted to swap food items with others.

Food Play

In line with our Environmental Sustainability policy, we discourage the use of food as a play material and instead encourage activities which involve preparing and tasting food. We use food in play where it enhances the children's learning opportunities and/or follows their interests. We ensure any food we do use for play with the children is carefully supervised and where possible dry food is re-used.

We will also use the following procedures to ensure children are kept safe:

- Choking hazards are checked and avoided
- We will not use whole jelly cubes for play. If we do use jelly to enhance our play, then all jelly will be prepared with water as per the instructions and then used
- Small objects such as dried pasta and pulses will not be used for younger children
- Food may be coloured with non-toxic food colouring so that children are more aware that it is not to be eaten
- All allergies and intolerances will be checked, and activities will be adapted to suit all children's needs, so no child is excluded
- All activities including food will be included on the planning sheets showing all allergens, so all staff are aware of the ingredients
- Children's allergies will be visible to staff when placing out food play activities to ensure all needs are met
- Any cooking activities will be checked prior to start to ensure all children are able use all the ingredients based on their individual needs

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
27/03/26	<i>Jodie Hursthouse</i>	30/04/2029